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BY

Hickling

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT, ESQ.

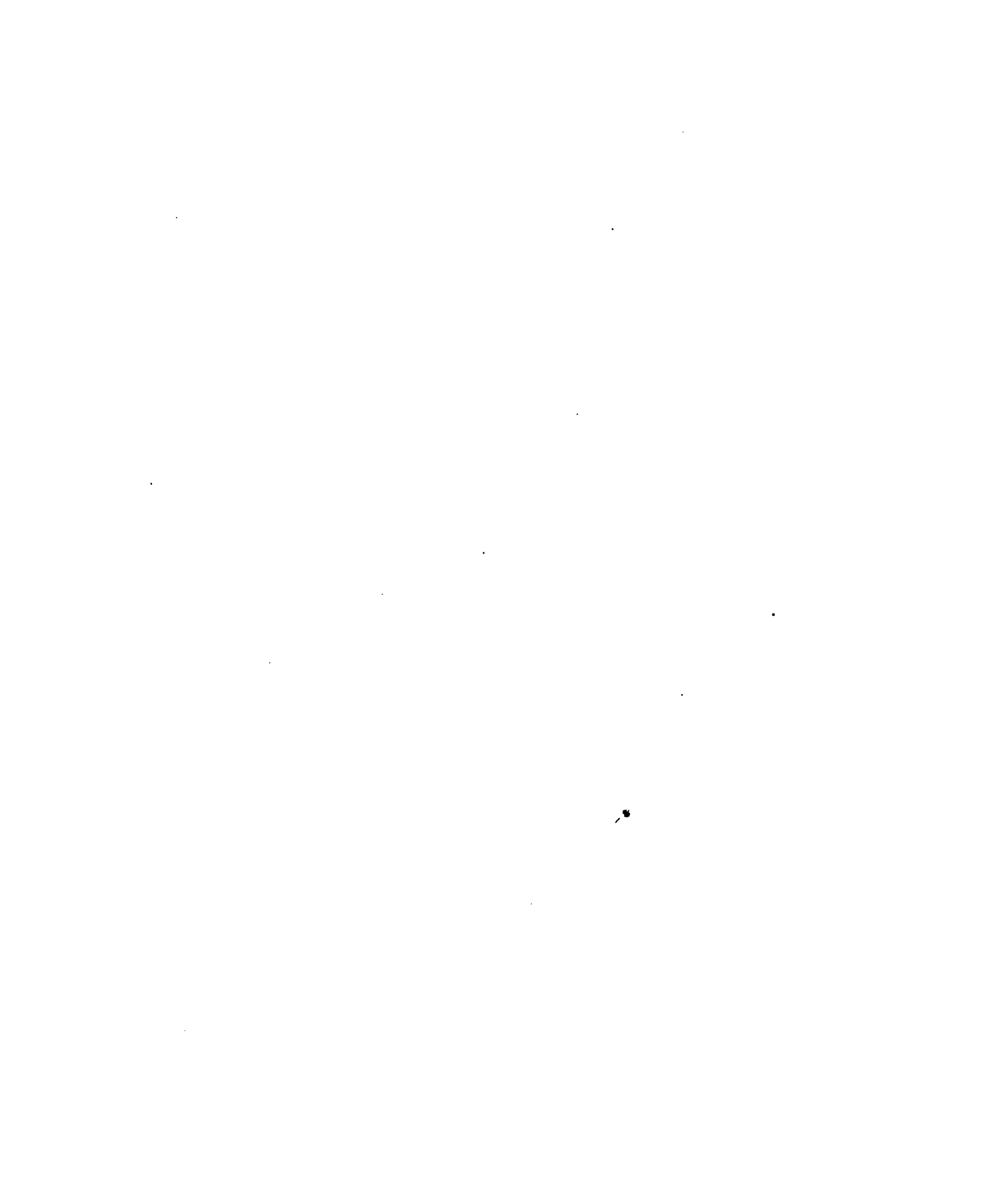
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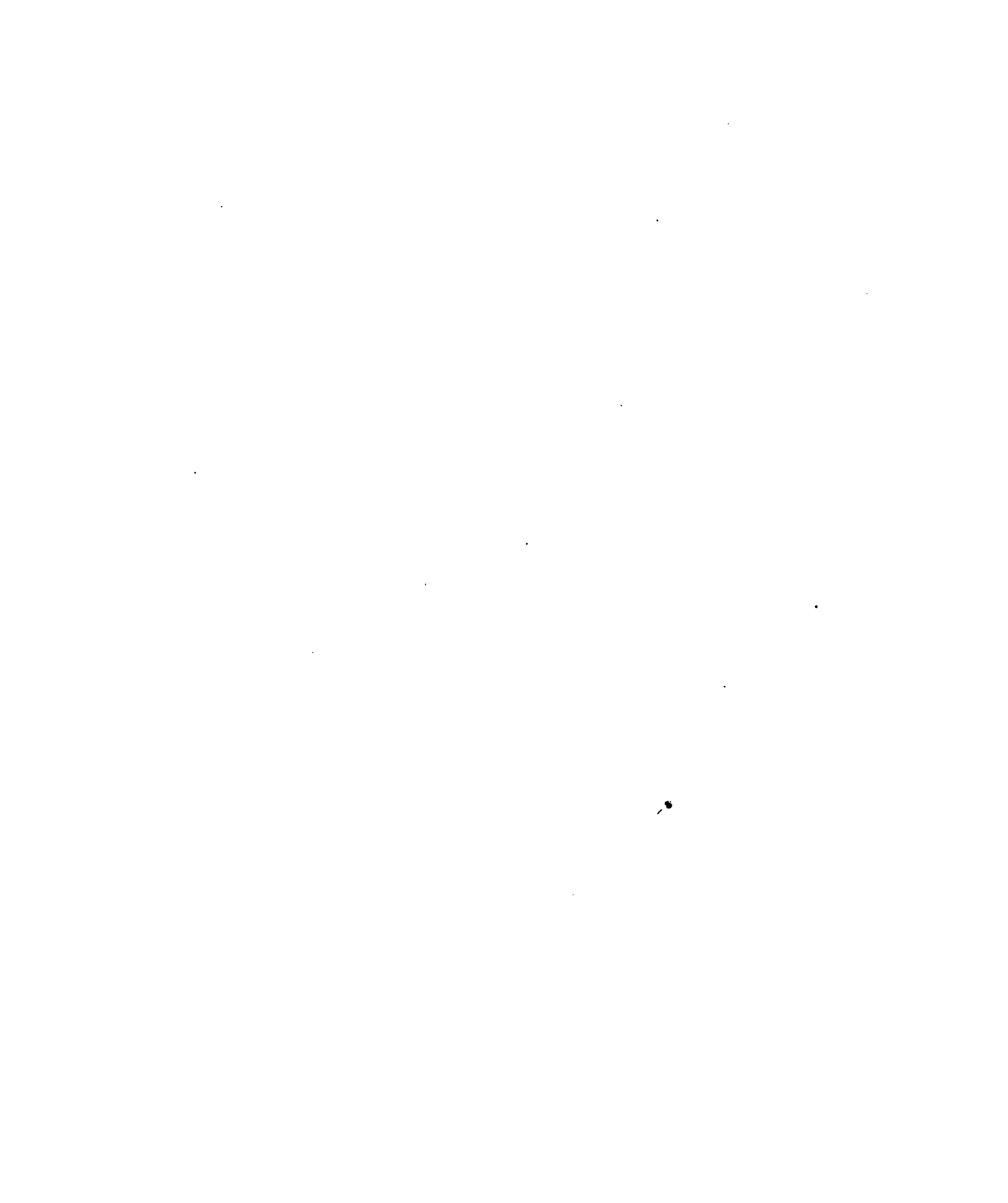
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Abbate Lammey



Abbot Lawrence

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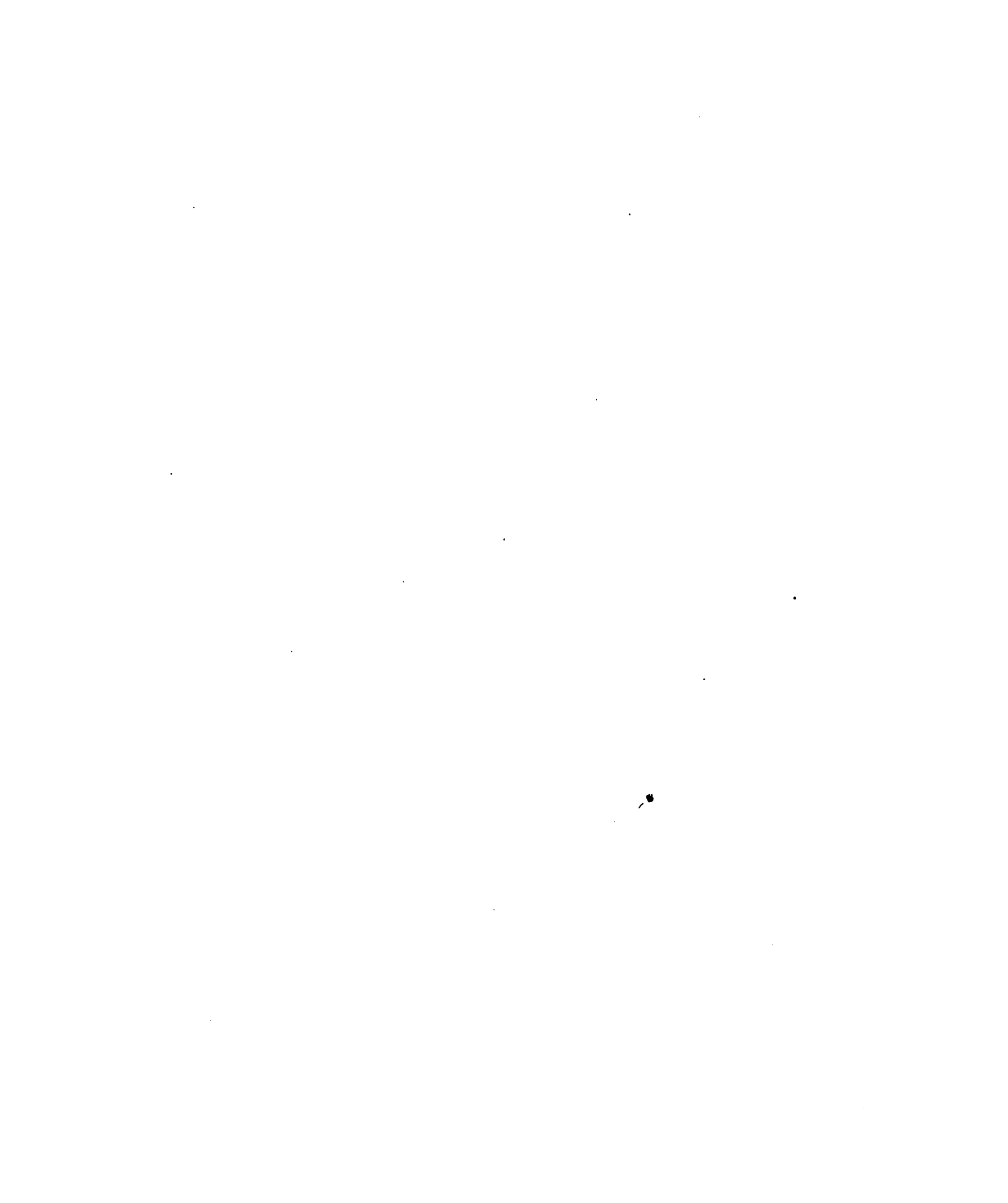
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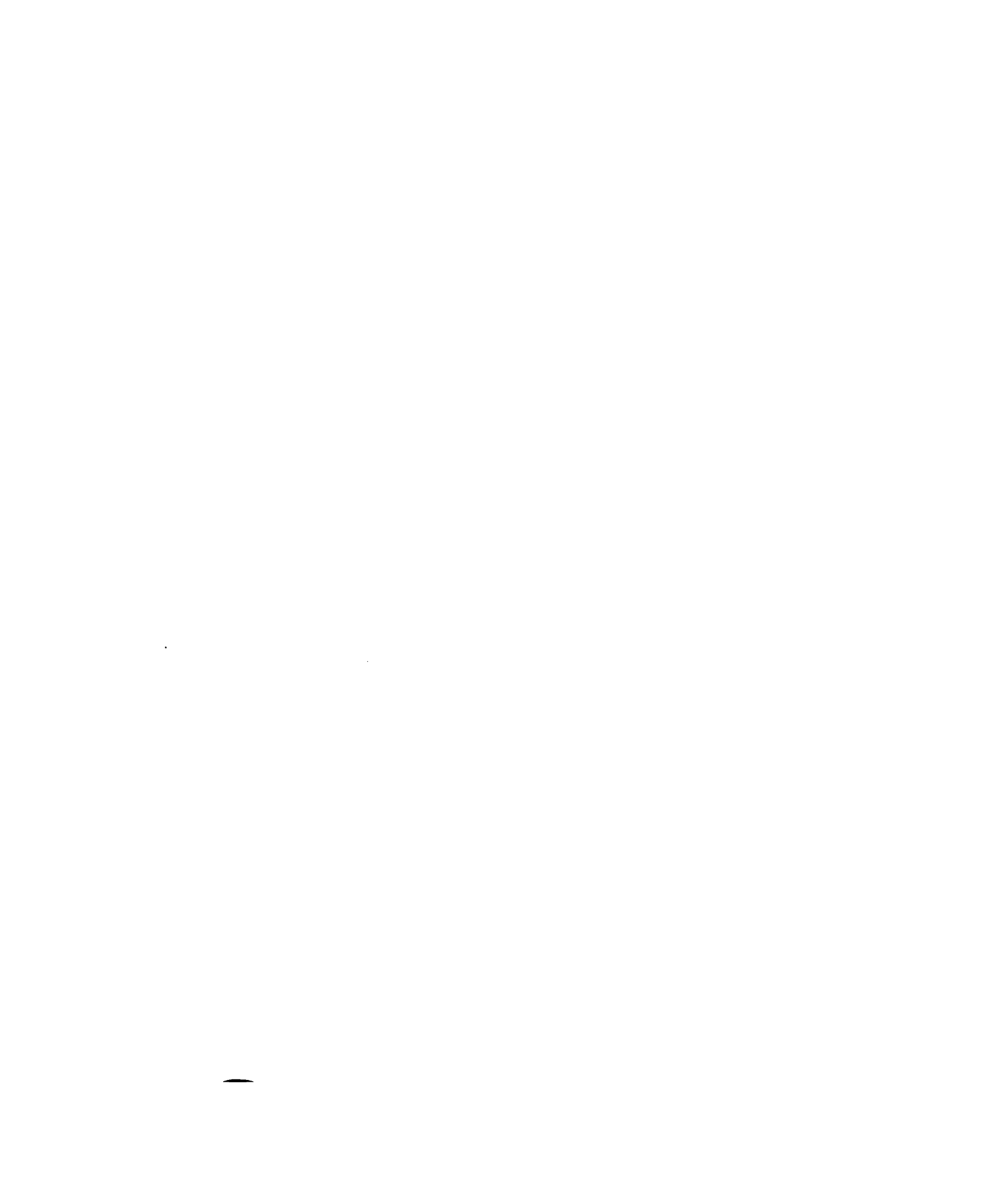




Abbott Lawrence



Abbot Lawrence





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Col. Timothy Bigelow Lawrence
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Map of 1846

See Hon. Abel Lawrence



M E M O I R.

IN the following pages, we shall endeavor to present a sketch of the life and character of **ABBOTT LAWRENCE**, now that the grave has closed over him, and while his virtues are yet fresh in the memory of his countrymen.

The name of **LAWRENCE** is one of the earliest to be found among the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts. **John Lawrence**, the first emigrant of the name, was established in Watertown as early as 1635, and may have come over at the same time with Governor Winthrop. He afterwards removed, with his wife, to

Groton, where he lived to a good old age; leaving, at his death, a numerous family of sons and daughters. From one of the former was descended the subject of the present memoir. His father, Samuel Lawrence, was a soldier of the Revolution. On the breaking out of the war with the mother-country, he was among the first to bear arms; and was one of the little band of heroes who accompanied Colonel Prescott, and fought by his side at the battle of Bunker's Hill. His regiment was accordingly in the hottest of the action; being stationed at the redoubt, the principal point of attack. It had nearly proved a fatal day to the young soldier, who, besides a wound in the arm, had his hat pierced by a musket-ball, which grazed his temples, and carried off part of the hair. He remained in the army till 1778, filling the post of adjutant under General Sullivan at Rhode Island. He was a man of much firmness of character, of unblemished integrity, and of such frank and open manners as made him popular with his townsmen. He lived till 1827; long

enough to receive the best reward of a parent, in witnessing the complete success of his children.

His widow survived him eighteen years; and many may recall her venerable form, as seen by them during her occasional visits to her sons in Boston. As a mother, she had probably greater influence than her husband in forming their characters. She had strict notions of obedience, with deeply seated religious principles, which she succeeded in communicating to her children. "Her form," to quote the language of a descendant, "bending over the bed of her children in silent prayer, when she was about leaving them for the night, is still among the earliest of their recollections."

ABBOTT, the fifth son, was born in Groton, on the 16th of December, 1792. His education, begun at the district school, was completed at the Groton Academy, of which his father had been a trustee for more than thirty years; and which now, in grateful commemoration of the endowments it has received

from the members of that family, bears the name of the Lawrence Academy.

We have few accounts of Mr. LAWRENCE'S earlier days. In a passing notice of them in a letter of his brother Amos, written many years after, the writer says, "I well remember him as the guiding-spirit of the boys of our neighborhood in breaking through the deep snow-drifts which often blocked up the roads in winter." The fearlessness and buoyant disposition thus noticed in the boy were the characteristics of the man in later life.

In 1808, it was resolved to send him to Boston, and place him in the store of his elder brother, Mr. Amos Lawrence, who had been for some years established there in business as an importer of English goods. There could have been no better Mentor to watch over the warm-hearted and inexperienced youth, thus drawn from his village obscurity to be thrown upon the trials and temptations of the world. It is unnecessary to speak of the character of this brother,

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now so widely known from a biography which may claim to be one of the most graceful tributes ever paid by filial piety to the memory of a parent.

ABBOTT was cordially welcomed by his brother, who from that hour watched over his steps in earlier days with a father's solicitude, and who followed his career in later life with feelings of pride and generous sympathy. "My brother came to me as my apprentice," says Mr. Amos Lawrence, in his Diary, "bringing his bundle under his arm, with less than three dollars in his pocket (and this was his fortune). A first-rate business lad he was; but, like other bright lads, needed the careful eye of a senior to guard him from the pitfalls he was exposed to." The following year, their brother William came to Boston also, to seek his fortune in the capital of New England. Their father, on this occasion, impressed on his three sons the importance of unity, quoting the pertinent language of Scripture, "A threefold cord is not quickly broken;" a precept which they religiously observed, living al-

ways together in that beautiful harmony which proved one great source of their prosperity.

After somewhat more than five years had elapsed, Mr. Amos Lawrence was so well satisfied with the sobriety and diligence of ABBOTT, and with his capacity for business, that he proposed to take him into partnership. He furnished the whole capital, amounting to fifty thousand dollars, — the fruits of his judicious management since his establishment in Boston. The times were by no means encouraging; for we were then in the midst of our war with England. But every thing seemed to prosper under the prudent direction of Mr. Lawrence. Scarcely, however, had the articles of copartnership been signed, than the Bramble news created a panic that fearfully affected the prices of goods. The stock of the firm depreciated to such an extent, that ABBOTT looked on himself as already a bankrupt. His brother, touched with his distress, offered at once to cancel the copartnership indentures, and to pay him, moreover, five thousand



Abbot Lawrence

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foreign countries, on which it had hitherto relied for those fabrics which were the necessaries of life; the employment it would give to thousands of operatives in the North, who would find here a field for talents hitherto unknown to themselves; and the benefits it would confer on the planters of the South, in raising, by means of competition, the prices of the raw material they had to sell. These views he exhibited in his private correspondence and his public addresses. He unfolded them more at large in a well-known series of printed letters addressed to the Hon. William C. Rives, of Virginia, which appeared in 1846. In these he discusses the subject of a tariff on the broadest grounds, enforcing his arguments, according to his wont, by an array of statistical facts, some of them exceedingly striking. Instead of limiting their application to his own part of the country, he particularly directs it to Virginia, the impoverished condition of whose soil seemed to call for some extraordinary action to restore the ancient prosperity of

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the State. Above all, he insists on the necessity of the education of the poorer classes, as the only true basis, whether in a moral or physical point of view, of the public prosperity. On this last theme he was always eloquent, urging it in his public addresses, abroad as well as at home, and with an effect which, as we shall see hereafter, was acknowledged, by those who witnessed it, to have been attended with the happiest results.

In 1827 was held the Harrisburg Convention, — a meeting, it is hardly necessary to say, of delegates from different parts of the Union, for the purpose of taking into consideration the best measures for protecting the manufacturing interests of the country. Mr. LAWRENCE, whose attention to the subject and the soundness of whose views upon it were well known, was one of the seven delegates sent by Massachusetts. The large amount of practical information which he brought with him proved of infinite service in the deliberations that followed; and there was probably

no one of the body who was more instrumental in procuring its sanction to the memorial which was laid before Congress, and which had so great an influence in determining the action of the government in respect to the tariff of 1828.

Notwithstanding the interest he took in public affairs, and the capacity which he showed for the management of them, Mr. LAWRENCE had evinced no desire to enter on the political arena, or to hold office of any kind. In 1831, he was elected to the Common Council of Boston, but, at the end of his term, declined a re-election. Nor did he from that time ever accept any place, either under the city government or that of the State. In 1834, however, he consented to stand as a candidate for a seat in the House of Representatives at Washington.

On taking his place in that body, he was at once put on the Committee of Ways and Means; showing that his reputation for financial talent had already preceded him. During the two years that he sat on

the floor of that house, he rarely attempted any thing like a set and elaborate speech. When he did speak, it was on topics with which he was familiar; and his wise and practical views, which he enforced by arguments not local or sectional in their nature, but embracing the interests of the whole country, commanded the deepest attention of his audience. His frank and cordial address, flowing less from conventional courtesy than from the natural kindness of his heart, conciliated his hearers; and that "inestimable temper" which Gibbon commends so highly in the British minister, Lord North, disarmed the severity of his opponents, and served, like oil upon the waters, to calm the angry passions of debate. The same qualities gave Mr. LAWRENCE, out of the walls of Congress, an influence which proved of the highest service to the cause in which he was embarked. When he returned home, at the expiration of his term, there was probably no member of the body with which he had acted who possessed a larger measure of their confidence, or who was so universally popular.

His constituents testified their sense of his services by inviting him, on his return, to a public dinner. This he declined in a letter, in which he touches, briefly but comprehensively, on the great questions that agitated the public mind at that day, showing himself throughout a stanch but liberal-minded Whig. Notwithstanding the importunities of his friends, he declined a re-election to Congress; nor could he be induced to alter his purpose by the remarkable assurance given to him by the members of the opposite party, that, if he would consent to stand, no candidate should be brought out against him.

Four years later, however, he consented to accept a second nomination, and again took his seat in the House of Representatives at Washington. It was a disastrous session to him; for, shortly after his arrival, he was attacked by typhus fever, of so malignant a type, that, for some time, small hopes were entertained of his recovery. But he had good advice; and his fine constitution, and the care of his devoted wife, enabled

him, by the blessing of Providence, to get the better of his disorder. It left behind, however, the seeds of another malady, in an enlargement of the liver, which caused him much suffering in after-life, and finally brought him to the grave.

Finding a southern climate unfavorable to his health, he resigned his seat in Congress, and returned to Boston, where he at once resumed his usual avocations. He was not long permitted to indulge in a state of political inaction. In 1842, the convention was held for the settlement of the North-eastern boundary, — that vexed question, which, after baffling all attempts at an adjustment, including those by means of royal arbitration, had at length assumed a form which menaced an open rupture between the United States and England. Mr. LAWRENCE was one of the commissioners who, at the wise suggestion of Mr. Webster, were sent by the States of Maine and Massachusetts, to Washington, with full powers to arrange the matter definitively with Lord Ashburton, who had come out invested with

similar powers on behalf of his own country. No man in our community could have been better fitted for the place than Mr. LAWRENCE; for he had a good knowledge of the subject, was well acquainted with the characters of the parties who were to discuss it, and possessed, in a remarkable degree, the qualities for success as a negotiator. "Mr. LAWRENCE," said a distinguished foreign minister, who had personal knowledge of his abilities in this way, "had so much frankness and cordiality in his address, and impressed one so entirely with his own uprightness, that he could do much in the way of negotiation that others could not." There was an ample field for the exercise of these powers on the present occasion, when prejudices of long standing were to be encountered, when pretensions of the most opposite kind were to be reconciled, when the pertinacity with which these pretensions had been maintained had infused something like a spirit of acrimony into the breasts of the disputants. Yet no acrimony could stand long against the genial temper of Mr. LAWRENCE,

or against that spirit of candor and reasonable concession which called forth a reciprocity of sentiment in those he had to deal with. The influence which he thus exerted over his colleagues contributed in no slight degree to a concert of action between them. Indeed, without derogating from the merits of the other delegates, it is not too much to say, that, but for the influence exerted by Mr. LAWRENCE on this occasion, the treaty, if it had been arranged at all, would never have been brought into the shape which it now wears.

In the summer of the following year, Mr. LAWRENCE, whose health still felt the effects of his illness at Washington, proposed to recruit it by a voyage to England. He embarked with his family on board the "Columbia," — the ill-fated steamer which was wrecked on Black Ledge, near Seal Island, in Nova Scotia. All on board were fortunate enough to escape to land. Five days they remained on that dreary spot, exposed to wet, hunger, and miseries of every description.

None of that forlorn company will ever forget the disinterested kindness shown by Mr. LAWRENCE, and his courageous and cheerful spirit, which infused life into the most desponding. They were at length transported to Halifax, whence he proceeded on his voyage. In England, he met with a hearty welcome from some who had shared his hospitality in the United States, and many more who knew him only by reputation; but who became his fast friends in after-life.

On his return home, he resumed his business, which pressed on him the more heavily as it became more widely extended. During his leisure, he was not so much engrossed by politics as not to give attention to a subject which he always had much at heart, — the cause of education. Among his many charities, which seemed to be as necessary to satisfy the wants of his own nature as those of the subjects of them, we find him constantly giving away money to assist in educating poor young men of merit. He gave two thousand dollars for prizes to the pupils of the Boston Latin and

High Schools. He now contemplated a donation, on a much larger scale, to Harvard University. He was satisfied, that, however liberal the endowments of that institution for objects of literary culture, no adequate provision had been made for instruction in science, more particularly in its application to the useful arts, — a deficiency which naturally came more readily within the reach of his own observation. In a remarkable letter addressed by him to Mr. Eliot, the treasurer of the college, in June, 1847, he explains, with great beauty and propriety of language, his views on the subject, and, with no less precision, points out the best mode of carrying them into effect. He concludes by offering the sum of fifty thousand dollars for the endowment of such a scientific school as he had proposed. This sum he afterwards doubled by a provision to that effect in his will; thus making the whole donation a hundred thousand dollars. Large as was this sum, its value was greatly enhanced by the wise arrangements made for its application. His sugges-

tions met with the approval of the corporation. He had the satisfaction of seeing a building erected and an institution organized on the principles he had recommended. Fortunately, the services were obtained, at the outset, of an illustrious scholar, who, by the consent of Europe, stood at the head of his department of science, and whose salary of fifteen hundred dollars per annum was wholly defrayed by Mr. LAWRENCE, in addition to his other donations, so long as he lived. A letter addressed to him by a distinguished professor of the school gave him the sweet assurance, in his last illness, of the extraordinary proficiency of the pupils, — in other words, of the complete success of his benevolent enterprise; and he might well be cheered by the reflection that the Lawrence Scientific School would perpetuate his name to future generations, who would cherish with gratitude the memory of their benefactor.

Mr. LAWRENCE was a member of the convention which nominated Mr. Clay for the Presidency. The

interest he felt in public affairs led him to take an active part in promoting the success of the Whig candidate, as he had before shown equal zeal in the canvass for Gen. Harrison, though — as the country has good reason to remember — with very different results. In 1847, Gen. Taylor was nominated as the Whig candidate for President, and Mr. Fillmore for Vice-President. The history of the convention which made these nominations is too familiar to be recapitulated here. It is enough to say that Mr. LAWRENCE had received assurances, down to the very eve of the election, which gave him every reason to suppose that he was to be named for the latter office. Whatever may have been his disappointment, he did not betray it by a word. "Well, I am perfectly satisfied," was the answer he made to the friend who was appointed to inform him of the result; and, instead of looking for pretexts, as many, not to say most, men would have done, for withdrawing from the canvass, or at least for looking coldly upon it, he was among the first to join

in a call for a meeting of the Whigs in Faneuil Hall, and to address them, in the warmest manner, in support of the regular ticket. In the same magnanimous and patriotic spirit, he visited the principal towns in the State, delivering addresses and using all his efforts to secure the triumph of the good cause.

On the election of Gen. Taylor to the chief magistracy of the country, the confidence he reposed in Mr. LAWRENCE, and the prominent position occupied by the latter in the party, recommended him at once to a seat in the cabinet. The place of Secretary of the Navy was accordingly offered to him, and afterwards that of Secretary of the Interior. Both offices were declined by him; and when, soon after, he was nominated by the President to take the highest diplomatic post in the gift of the government, — the mission to England, — he declined that also. The large and important interests of which he had the charge made him see only the difficulties of such a step. The place, moreover, had been filled by distinguished statesmen,

two of the most recent of whom stood pre-eminent in the literature of the country; and Mr. LAWRENCE seems to have exaggerated the qualifications required for the post, or, at any rate, to have distrusted his own. From these various considerations, he had made up his mind to decline the offer when pressed upon him a second time by Gen. Taylor, and announced his decision to his friends. But some of them, taking a very different, and, as it proved, a more correct, view of the affair, persuaded him to review, and subsequently to reverse, his decision. In the month of September, 1849, he accordingly embarked, with his wife and a part of his family, for England.

Mr. LAWRENCE'S mission to the court of St. James was the most brilliant part of his political career, and fully justified the sagacity of those who advised him to undertake it. Taking all circumstances into consideration, few men could have been so well fitted for the place. If he had not the profound scholarship of his immediate predecessors, he had, what was of great

moment, a large practical acquaintance with affairs; a thorough knowledge of the resources of his own country, and of the country to which he was accredited; a talent quite remarkable, as we have seen, for negotiation; a genial temper, well suited to thaw out the chilling reserve of manner too apt to gather round the really warm heart of the Englishman; a generous spirit of hospitality, with a fortune to support it, enabling him to collect round him persons of most eminence in the society of the capital, and to bring them in contact with similar classes of his own countrymen; thus happily affording opportunity for allaying ancient prejudices, and fostering mutual sentiments of respect and good-will.

A similar influence was exerted by the public addresses which, from time to time, he was called on to make in different parts of the kingdom, at meetings held to promote the great interests of agriculture, of manufactures, or of educational reform. Coming from a land where the people had made such progress in the

various departments of labor and mechanical skill, and from a part of the country where popular education had made most progress, he was naturally listened to with much attention. The paramount importance of education for the masses was the theme he constantly pressed home upon his hearers. Thus, at Manchester, we find him drawing a comparison between the laboring classes in England and the United States in respect to education, and plainly telling his audience, that, "if England hoped to keep her place in the van of civilization, it must be by educating the humblest of her classes up to the highest point of other nations." "The able as well as delicate manner," says an eminent British journal, "in which Mr. LAWRENCE handled this subject, made a deep impression on his auditory; and it had probably no inconsiderable influence in stimulating that highly creditable educational movement of which Manchester has since been the scene, and in which it has stood out in strong contrast to the other great towns of the empire."

We find him speaking to the same purpose, in a striking passage often quoted from the speech made by him at Mr. Peabody's dinner, at the close of the Great Exhibition in London. A broader field for these popular addresses was offered by a visit which he made to Ireland in the autumn of 1852. The welcome he received from the generous-hearted people was altogether extraordinary. His reputation had prepared the way for it; and all were eager to see the representative of a land to which their own countrymen were flocking as to a place of refuge from the troubles of the Old World. Well might the "Times" say that "the American Minister found himself received with almost the honors of royalty; that railway directors gave him special trains, banquets, and addresses; and every city prepared an ovation."

In the midst of this festal progress, Mr. LAWRENCE was closely observing the condition of the country and its inhabitants, and drawing materials for an elaborate report of it to the Department of State. The despatch

is of much length, embodying his views on the great questions of interest touching the state of that unhappy country, the policy of the English government towards it, and its probable future; the whole accompanied by a mass of statistical information, which his position gave him obvious advantages for collecting. This valuable report forms one of numerous despatches of a similar nature which occupied what was regarded as the American minister's leisure time during his diplomatic residence. Many of the papers are of great length, and must have been prepared with much care. Some few have been printed by order of Congress. The rest are to be found on the files of the Department of State at Washington. One has only to specify the titles of some of these to show the variety of the topics to which they relate. Thus, we find one containing curious estimates on the comparative cost of building and manning merchant ships in England and the United States; another on the guard-ships for the suppression of the slave-trade; another on the commerce

carried on with Africa; two or three on the postal relations of the country, with reference to a reduction of the rate of ocean-postage; another, the result of much consideration, on the currency of both England and our own country. Besides these communications on particular topics, we find others, of a more general nature, containing a survey of the actual condition of England, supported by abundant statistical detail; with ample discussion on its course of trade, on the character of parties, and the policy of the government. The opportunities of personal observation enjoyed by Mr. LAWRENCE abroad served, it may be remarked, to strengthen the opinions he had expressed at home of the necessity of a protective policy by our own government, if we would contend successfully against the cheaper labor of Europe. In this survey of the national character and resources, the despatches of Mr. LAWRENCE remind one of the reports — *relazioni*, as they are called — which were made, by order of their government, by the Venetian ambassadors, and which, after

being read, on their return, before the Senate, were deposited in the public archives, where they furnish some of the most authentic materials for the historian.

Among the despatches are two particularly worthy of consideration, as relating to negotiations that opened the way to important treaties. The first of these relates to the fisheries. No sooner had Mr. LAWRENCE become acquainted with the course pursued by the English government in sending out a fleet of armed vessels to assert its maritime rights on the coast of Nova Scotia, than, without waiting for instructions, he at once opened the matter to Lord Malmesbury, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, and urged the mischievous consequences likely to result from an action so precipitate and so menacing in its nature. His remonstrances were of sufficient weight to influence the instructions afterwards issued by the government; and Mr. LAWRENCE'S negotiations, which received the approval of the President, placed affairs on the quiet basis on which they continued till a treaty was definitively

settled. When we reflect on the irritation that would have been produced in this country if the ill-considered measure of the English government had been fully carried out, we cannot doubt that the timely and temperate remonstrance of the American minister did much to save his country from a rupture with Great Britain.

The other affair concerned Central America, — that uneasy question, which, after having been formally disposed of by treaty, has again risen, like a troubled spirit, to disturb the quiet of the world. The American envoy, in obedience to instructions from Washington, brought the subject before Lord Palmerston as early as November, 1849. He obtained from that minister an assurance that Great Britain had no design to occupy or colonize any part of Central America, and that she would willingly enter into a guarantee with the United States for the neutrality of the proposed canal across the Isthmus. But Mr. LAWRENCE was quick to perceive that these assurances would fail to answer the

purpose, unless Great Britain would consent to abandon her shadowy protectorate over the Mosquito Indians. He accordingly made this the subject of a particular representation in more than one interview with the English minister; and he further urged the abandonment of the protectorate on the strongest grounds of policy, in a long and able communication to Lord Palmerston, dated December 14, 1849. To this letter he received no reply; and early in the following year, it being thought there were greater facilities for conducting the negotiation in this country than in England, it was removed, for a final adjustment of the affair, to Washington.

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The citizens of Boston had made preparations for giving him such a brilliant reception on landing as might show their sense of his services. Unhappily, the time of his return was also that of the death of Mr. Webster. Mr. LAWRENCE proceeded to Marshfield the day after his arrival; and his first meeting with many of his friends and townsmen was at the celebration of the funeral obsequies of the great statesman. When a decent time had elapsed, his friends resumed their purpose of a complimentary dinner. But Mr. LAWRENCE, with much delicacy, declined their invitation, saying that "he should seem wanting in respect for the dead, as well as consideration for the living, were he to accept a festive entertainment at such a season of mourning."

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It would be painful to follow him through the long and wearisome summer, during which he was sensibly

losing ground day after day, yet with occasional intervals of ease that seemed to give promise that the disease was arrested. No one will forget the extraordinary interest shown on that occasion by all classes, and the eagerness with which they endeavored to draw from the physicians some encouragement for their hopes. A more remarkable proof of the hold he had upon the community was the daily announcement of the state of his health in the public journals,—a tribute the more touching that he held no official position to call it forth. It was the homage of the heart.

During the long period of his confinement, his sufferings served only to show the sweetness of his disposition. The circumstances which filled those around him with wretchedness and with apprehensions they could ill disguise had no power to disturb his serenity. He loved life. No man had greater reason to love it; for he had all that makes life valuable. But, as his hold loosened upon it, no mur-

mur, no sigh of regret, escaped his lips; while he bowed in perfect submission to the will of that Almighty Father who had ever dealt with him so kindly. As his strength of body diminished, that of his affections seemed to increase. He appeared to be constantly occupied with thoughts of others rather than of himself; and many a touching instance did he give of this thoughtfulness, and of his tender recollection of those who were dear to him. The desire of doing good, on the broadest scale, clung to him to the last. Not two weeks before his death, he was occupied with arranging the plan of the model-houses for the poor, for which he made so noble a provision in his will. His last hours were cheered by the assurance, as we have elsewhere noticed, that his wise and generous provisions for promoting a more scientific culture at Cambridge were crowned with entire success. He was dying with every thing around him to soften the bitterness of death; above all, with the sweet consciousness that he had not lived in vain. On the

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